

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

SPECIFICATION

Accompanying

Application for Grant of U.S. Letters Patent

TITLE: CARD GAME WITH DEALER ACTIVATION

INVENTOR: Kenneth J. Brunelle

CITIZENSHIP: U.S.A. RESIDENCE: Las Vegas, Nevada U.S.A.

POST OFFICE ADDRESS: P.O. Box 82257
Las Vegas, NV 89180-2257

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

 X Not applicable.

STATEMENT REGARDING FEDERALLY SPONSORED RESEARCH
OR DEVELOPMENT

 X Not applicable.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0001] Casino gambling involves many different games of chance. Some casino games involve playing cards that are used in competition with the casino or against other players. In the most popular casino games, players compete against the casino, the games are fast-paced, provide more than one opportunity to win and the bets are resolved quickly. Generally, the shorter the time between placing a bet and the winning of a hand, the more popular the game.

[0002] Some casino card games are variations on poker in which winning hands are determined according to generally accepted rules of card value and rank. In the play of Baccarat, for example, the face cards are assigned numerical values and the players play against each other in an effort to score as close to nine as possible. In poker, various combinations of cards determine the winner of each round and there is only one winning hand in each round of play.

[0003] Popular casino games based on the strategy and card priority of the game of poker provide multiple opportunities to win. Caribbean Stud, a

five-card poker game currently played in casinos, provides more than one chance to win with a particular hand. A limitation on the play of Caribbean Stud is the requirement for the dealer to have a qualifying hand, e.g., Ace-King. A player's hand may be a winner, but the player may lose the opportunity to receive a large payout because the dealer did not receive a qualifying hand.

[0004] Another popular casino game comparable to Caribbean Stud is Let It Ride, a game based on poker strategy and card priority. In the play of Let It Ride, as described in U.S. Patent 5,437,462, three cards are dealt to the player and two to the dealer. The player then combines his cards with the dealer's cards to produce a poker hand. Let It Ride is popular because of its fast-paced play, simple strategies, the opportunity to participate in an additional jackpot and multiple opportunities to win in the same hand.

[0005] A limitation on the play of Let It Ride is the apparent complexity of the betting. Three bets are placed on each hand with two of the bets being resolved, or withdrawn by the player, during three stages of play. A fourth bet is a bonus jackpot bet and is forfeited if the player does not receive a bonus hand. A prospective player must overcome his

reluctance to wager three times on one hand to begin play. The option to withdraw a portion of the wager is not productive for the casino – the player is allowed to take back a portion of the bet that has already been committed.

[0006] The highest ranked poker hand is a winner for both Caribbean Stud and Let It Ride. Based on the method of betting, both games allow multiple opportunities to win and generally meet the requirements for a popular casino game. However, the dealer-qualifying requirement of Caribbean Stud and the complexities of the betting requirements of Let It Ride are discouraging to the average player.

[0007] Other wagering card game methods are known. For example in Padukee, as described in U.S. Patent 5,415,414, the player places two bets plus a bonus jackpot wager.

[0008] Blackjack is a card game in which the participants play against the dealer (the casino) independently of other players. Cards are dealt one at a time from a shoe containing one or more poker decks. Each playing card is assigned a count value with the numbered cards having the corresponding whole number values two through 10, respectively; the face cards (King,

Queen, Jack) each having assigned count value of ten. The ace of any suit can be counted as one or eleven points at the player's discretion and the value can be changed during the playing of the hand. The Ace is the most powerful card in the deck, not only because it can be used as two distinct values, one and eleven, but also because it has the power to create a Blackjack.

[0009] In the play of Blackjack the player's goal is to draw cards which together should amount to 21 points, or as close as possible without exceeding 21. When the player gets 21 with his first two cards, he has Blackjack. If the player's sum of cards is closer to 21 than the dealer's hand, he wins as much as he has put on stake, except when he has Blackjack. In that case the player may win in a ratio of 3:2 times his bet or more (assuming the dealer does not also have Blackjack). If the player's sum of cards exceeds 21, he loses what he has at stake. If the player and the dealer have the same scores, no one wins and the stake goes back to the player in a so-called "push." A Blackjack combination beats any non-suited 21 count value combinations.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0010] The wagering card game of the present invention is a variation of the conventional game of Blackjack and is played with one or more decks of fifty-two playing cards, preferably a poker deck, and a bonus payout schedule. The game is played in a preliminary stage for a bonus payout, followed by a round of standard Blackjack. A hand of two cards is dealt to each player and to the dealer. Each player becomes eligible to play for a bonus payout by posting a bonus side bet.

[0011] Each player enters the game by posting an initial main bet, for example in a main bet wager circle provided on a playing surface. Each player may optionally post a side bet to be eligible to participate in a bonus payout. Following the rules of conventional Blackjack, the dealer deals two cards, one card at a time and face-up, to each player. The dealer receives one card face down and one card face-up. According to the preferred embodiment of the invention, the dealer's face-up card will activate bonus play. To activate bonus play the dealer's face-up card must be a two, three,

four, five or six. Upon activation a player must receive a qualifying hand on the first two cards dealt to be eligible for a bonus payout.

[0012] To qualify for a bonus payout, a player must post a bonus side bet (for example \$1) and possess a soft or hard seventeen, soft or hard eighteen, soft or hard nineteen, soft or hard twenty, Blackjack, nine, ten or eleven on the first two cards dealt in conjunction with the dealer activating bonus play.

[0013] The dealer will pay winning bonus side bet players before the regular game of Blackjack continues. Winning players will be awarded a predetermined bonus payout according to the bonus payout schedule.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING

[0014] FIGURE 1 illustrates a typical casino gaming table layout used in the wagering game of the present invention;

[0015] FIGURE 2 is a block diagram representing the flow of play in the game; and

[0016] FIGURE 3 is a bonus payout schedule.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0017] Referring to FIGURE 1, the wagering game of the present invention, referred to herein as "Card Game with Dealer Activation," is a card game played on a real or simulated playing surface 10. The playing surface is preferably a preprinted felt covering that is secured to the top of a gambling table. Alternatively, the playing surface can be simulated on a video screen and the game can be played via a computer under software control with the cards being simulated and the players participating via an interactive video station. Depicted on the playing surface 10 is a single dealer position 12, multiple player positions 14 and a multiple deck shoe 16. The layout of each player position 14 is identical to all other player positions. Although seven player positions 14 are shown, as many as ten players or as few as one player and one dealer may play the game.

[0018] Each player position 14 includes a main bet wagering circle 18 for receiving the player's main wager and a smaller optional bonus side bet circle 20. An insurance semicircle 22 is printed on the felt covering,

forming an arc that borders the player positions. The conventional Blackjack table seats a dealer and one to seven players. The first seat on the dealer's left is referred to as First Base, and the first seat on the dealer's right is referred to as Third Base. The main betting circle 18 and the side bet circle 20 are printed on the felt covering in front of each player seat. Immediately in front of the dealer is the casino's chip tray 24. On the dealer's left is the multiple-deck shoe 16 from which cards are withdrawn one at a time by the dealer. Multiple deck Blackjack games typically consist of an even number of decks (2, 4, 6, 8) although some casinos use five or seven decks. This permits the dealer to deal more hands per hour, thereby increasing the casino take, and it reduces (but does not eliminate) the player advantage gained from card counting.

[0019] On the dealer's immediate right is a money drop slot 26 where all currency and chips are deposited. Immediately below the drop slot is a numbered drop box in which the cash proceeds of a particular casino shift are deposited. Next to the drop slot to the right of the dealer is a card discard tray 28.

[0020] Referring now to FIGURE 1 and FIGURE 2, before any cards are dealt the player makes his bet, block 32, by placing the desired chips (value and number) into the main betting circle 18, thus becoming eligible to compete against the dealer. At this time, each player may also post a bonus side bet, block 34, for example one dollar, thus becoming eligible to participate in a bonus payout. A player becomes eligible (but not yet qualified) to compete in the bonus payout by placing his optional side bet in the side bet circle 20.

[0021] Following the rules of conventional Blackjack, the dealer deals two cards, one at a time and face-up, to each player, block 36. The dealer receives one card face-down and one card face-up.

[0022] Referring again to FIGURE 1, the dealer position 12 optionally includes two printed rectangular borders defining card docks 38 and 40, labeled CARD ONE and CARD TWO, into which two cards are dealt for the dealer. Usually the playing surface immediately in front of the dealer is blank. CARD ONE, the face-up card or activation card, is dealt first followed by CARD TWO, the face down card, which is placed beneath the activation card.

[0023] Referring again to the flow diagram in FIGURE 2, a deck of poker cards is shuffled at block 30. The deck maybe shuffled manually by the dealer, by an automatic shuffling machine or by the computer. Optionally the cards are dealt one at a time from the casino shoe 16 that may contain several standard poker decks. Each deck contains fifty-two cards, so that fresh cards are immediately available for dealing from a new deck as each deck is exhausted, Sometimes, prior to shuffling, the dealer will fan out the cards on the table so that the players can verify that all cards are present.

[0024] After the cards are shuffled, the complete deck is put in front of a player to be "cut." The player is given a plastic index card to be placed anywhere he chooses in the deck. The deck is split there, put on the table and the section that was on the bottom is now placed on top. The player sitting on first base is normally the one to cut first and the cutting rotates clockwise among the players on subsequent cuts. After the dealer places all cards together he will remove and discard the first card. This is referred to as "burning" a card. This card is normally placed in the discard tray 28 and all subsequent discarded playing cards are placed on top. The dealer will

also place the plastic index card somewhere in the deck and only deal cards until the index card has been reached. He will continue dealing that particular round, but reshuffle the deck as soon as that round is completed.

[0025] Once all the main bets and bonus side bets are down, two cards (one at a time) are dealt from the deck shoe 16 to each player in turn from left to right, block 36. Usually the cards are dealt face-up to the players and are not allowed to be touched by the players. The dealer gives a first card to the first baseman face-up, then the second player and so on in turn until all players have one card. Then the dealer deals his own first card and places it face-up in front of him on the table. Then a second card is dealt to all players in the same order, also face-up. Then the dealer takes a second card and places it face-down in front of him, usually beneath his face-up card.

[0026] Referring again to the flow diagram in FIGURE 2, block 42. To activate bonus play the dealer's face-up card must be a two, three, four, five or six. Bonus side bet play will not be activated if the dealer's face-up card is a seven, eight, nine, ten, jack, queen, king or ace. Activation must occur before side bet play is continued.

[0027] Referring again to the flow diagram in FIGURE 2, block 44. Upon activation, [0026], a player must receive a qualifying hand on the first two cards dealt to be eligible for a bonus side bet payout. A qualifying hand is a soft or hard seventeen, soft or hard eighteen, soft or hard nineteen, soft or hard twenty, Blackjack, nine, ten or eleven only.

[0028] A soft seventeen is a two card combination consisting of any ace with any six. A soft eighteen is a two card combination consisting of any ace with any seven. A soft nineteen is a two card combination consisting of any ace with any eight and a soft twenty is a two card combination consisting of any ace with any nine. A soft nineteen may also be used as a nine and a soft twenty may also be used as a ten for side bet purposes. A hard seventeen is a two card combination in which the two card values added together equal the sum of seventeen. The same concept is also used for a hard eighteen, hard nineteen or hard twenty.

[0029] A player hand of nine, ten or eleven are considered double down hands. Nine is a two card combination in which the two card values added together equal the sum of nine. The same concept is also used for a hand of ten or eleven.

[0030] A “Blackjack” is defined as the combination of any Ace and any 10 point value card in the original dealt hand of two cards. The point total of these two cards is 21. A Blackjack combination occurs only where a player or the dealer is dealt an ace and any 10 point value card in the first two cards of the originally dealt hand.

[0031] Referring again to the flow diagram in FIGURE 2, block 46. All players posting a bonus side bet and meeting the activation and qualifying criteria will receive a bonus payout according to the predetermined bonus payout schedules (FIG 3), 48 and 60.

[0032] Any player who is dealt a soft or hard seventeen, soft or hard eighteen, soft or hard nineteen or soft or hard twenty on the first two cards dealt in conjunction with the dealer’s face-up card being any two, three, four, five, or six will be awarded a payout of 2 to 1 (FIG 3), schedule 48, payout 50.

[0033] Any player who is dealt a nine, ten or eleven on the first two cards dealt in conjunction with the dealer’s face-up card being any two,

three, four, five or six will be awarded a payout of 4 to 1 (FIG 3), schedule 48, payout 52.

[0034] Any player who is dealt a Blackjack on the first two cards dealt in conjunction with the dealer's face-up card being any two, three, four, five or six will be awarded a payout of 7 to 1 (FIG 3), schedule 48, payout 54.

[0035] Any player who is dealt an Ace and King on the first two cards dealt in conjunction with the dealer's face-up card being any two, three, four, five or six will be awarded a payout of 18 to 1 (FIG 3), schedule 48, payout 56.

[0036] Any player who is dealt the Ace of Hearts and the King of Hearts on the first two cards dealt in conjunction with the dealer's face-up card being any two, three, four, five, or six will be awarded a payout of 40 to 1 (FIG 3), schedule 60, payout 62.

[0037] Any player who is dealt the Ace of Hearts and the King of Hearts on the first two cards dealt in conjunction with the dealer's face-up

card being any six will be awarded a payout of 200 to 1 (FIG 3), schedule 48, payout 58.

[0038] Any player who is dealt an Ace and King on the first two cards dealt in conjunction with the dealer's face-up card being any two, three, four, five or six will be awarded a payout of 19 to 1 (FIG 3), schedule 60, payout 64.

[0039] The dealer resolves the bonus side bets according to the bonus payout schedules 48 or 60, as shown in FIGURE 3, block 46. The bonus payout schedule is displayed for viewing by all players during the play of each round, for example on a sign set up adjacent the playing table 10, on a video screen, or imprinted on the playing surface itself.

[0040] Wagers from non-winners of bonus side bet play will be collected before the regular Blackjack game resumes. The dealer may collect bets if the dealer's face-up card does not activate bonus play. Only players receiving a Blackjack on the first two cards dealt will be awarded a consolation payout of 1 to 1 if bonus play is not activated (FIG 3), payout 66.

[0041] The play of regular Blackjack then proceeds, block 68, starting with the two-card hands that were dealt initially. After all players stand, the dealer evaluates each player's hand, determines main bet winners and resolves main bets according to standard Blackjack rules of play, block 70, thus concluding the first round of play. The play of the next Blackjack round then commences with the shuffling of cards, block 30.

[0042] It will be apparent that the card game of the present invention overcomes the limitations of conventional casino games such as Caribbean Stud and Let It Ride. It includes all the attributes desired for a popular wagering card game: it is simple to play and fast-paced; a player is able to win a bonus payout with his original hand; and the game provides for the possibility of multiple winners during the play of each hand.